

ing in Britain who have retired from the regular army to Volunteer battalions thus reorganised. Local interests must give way to Imperial needs, and capacity for command become the only qualification for the higher ranks. All "regular" officers retiring under fifty should be required, if resident in Britain, to join a branch of our army, and given the option of Militia or Volunteers. This would immensely raise the Volunteers in public esteem.

It has frequently been pointed out that the bulk of the Artillery is in parts of the country where it would not be likely to be required under any circumstances; but this fault could be easily remedied if the system of payment were to be introduced.

It may be urged that the field of recruiting for such a force would interfere with that of the Militia. If a preference were given for married men, and if a char-

acter from the employer and a residence in the recruiting area of the battalion were to be insisted on, this need not be the case.

The commonest outcry against all reform is that connected with the increase of expenditure. Undoubtedly the maintenance of a great empire is an expensive affair, but not so costly either to our pockets or to our pride as the payment of a heavy war indemnity might prove.

If we are to have a citizen army, let us by all means have a good one. At present it must be admitted that, in spite of the almost heroic exertions of some of the individual officers, and notwithstanding the excellence of much of the material in the ranks, there does not exist in the force, as at present constituted, sufficient power of control to make it, as a military organisation, worthy of the best traditions of our land.

C. P. LYNDEN-BELL.

*Reviewing Medical Article - by  
 Herbert Maxwell ? who has just  
 given a Life of Wellington -  
 with references to the Saxon Times  
 Blackwood's Mag - May 1898 -*





## ODD VOLUMES.

## I.

THE belief in a future state of reward and punishment, nearly universal among the human race, receives remarkable modifications according to the physical surroundings and mode of life of different nations. The Red Indian can imagine nothing better than the chase: to his spirit the immortal instinct has suggested an ideal land with never-failing herds of buffaloes; and his "happy hunting-grounds" have passed into proverbial use with us. On the other hand, the heaven of the Protestant Christian, to whom the Red Man has had to yield his possessions in this world, has been described by Mr Crauford as "a prolonged picnic of the domestic affections."<sup>1</sup> Similarly, the precise nature of the place of eternal torment has received various interpretation according to the earthly experience of different races. We, in Western Europe, having derived our religion from oriental sources, where the sun is the natural power most dreaded, have accepted the idea of intense heat—unquenchable fire—as the most intolerable form of punishment. But the Red Indian suffers most from cold in this world; his hell, therefore, presents itself to him like one of Dante's most appalling pictures—a *mer âe glace*, swept everlastingly by piercing winds.<sup>2</sup> To modern humanitarians (and we are all humanitarians now, as compared with bygone generations), the idea of never-ending, excruciating physical pain has become too repug-

nant to be entertained as the inevitable retribution for human error or obstinacy: many people regard the mere infinite prolongation of existence, under an obligation to reflect on lost opportunities, misused gifts, and friendships forfeited by exclusion from the abode of the blest, as the utmost retribution on the wicked that could be reconciled with any human conception of mercy and equity. But the question is far too solemn and profound to be discussed in this place: it has only been referred to because, seeing that various races have depicted the future state subjectively to their experience in this world, there does not seem to be any limits to each man's speculation from his own point of view. It would be almost as difficult, for instance, for one who derives frequent solace from reading to conceive heaven as a place without books, as to imagine it without human friendship. The absence of books might be but indifferently compensated for by the presence of their writers: in this world, at least, it does not always happen that he who delights us between boards is equally good company in shoe-leather. Horace, Montaigne, Shakespeare, Scott—we might lose nothing by exchanging their books for their conversation; but, on the other hand, Swift was tiresomely deaf, Dr Johnson's personal habits were something short of pretty, and Voltaire—well, the dear man would strike one as sadly

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<sup>1</sup> Christian Instincts and Modern Doubts.

<sup>2</sup> Catlin's North American Indians.



out of place in a celestial scene where there was nothing to scathe with ridicule. Thus the book-lover might conjure up a sufficiently appalling retribution for his own evil-doing by imagining a perspective of ages through which he should be forced to pass without one glimpse of a printed page.

Perhaps this is not a very profitable line of meditation, and certainly it is not very closely connected with the subject of this paper—viz., the chance meetings of a lounge with out-of-the-way authors.

It sometimes occurs to one to wonder why portrait-painters do not make more frequent use of book-shelves as the background of their subjects. There is no such charming furniture as books—no tapestry so rich as the glow, the glimmer, or the gloom reflected from their serried backs; even pictures fail to diffuse such an air of comfort in a room. On the other hand, what scene so depressing as a public library? Those, indeed, who learn the use of one of these institutions acquire affection for it: my steps turn cheerfully up St James's Square to the wonderful storehouse of the London Library (much as I resent the over-zealous enterprise of the committee in demolishing the grimy old front in order to replace it with Heaven knows what fandango of the urban architect), for I have learned to value its inexhaustible resources, its twilight resting-places, the wonderful adroitness and rapidity of its staff.

But it must be confessed that a library of this sort has few attractions for the casual visitor. Tens—nay, hundreds—of thousands of books, most of them uniformly clad in a tint so designedly sombre as will least betray dirt, tend to deter rather than to attract

the loiterer: *studiorum instrumenta*, to be sure, but not the tools that fit so sweetly after long use into the accustomed palm, nor yet those that wear such a seductive burnish and crispness in the warehouse. In a library like this, books do not seem to be the same creatures as those you know so well at home, in your friend's house, or in the club: the difference is as great as between the cattle penned by thousands for slaughter at Deptford, and the same animals scattered over the summer landscape. Nobody goes to the cattle-market till he has made up his mind what he wants, but any one may derive enjoyment from the lowing herds among their natural surroundings.

Books, like men and women, owe a great deal to the circumstances under which one meets them. It happened one day that I had to while away an hour or two in a small town of remote westerly Scotland. From the scale of the ancient inn, with its deserted stable-court opening through an archway upon the highroad to Carlisle, it was evident that it had once been a change-house for the mail-coach; but it was still and forlorn enough now. Outside, it was raining and blowing snappishly, which forbade all project of exploring the neighbourhood; inside, the furniture of the commercial-room was not exactly voluptuous—good solid mahogany, with black horsehair seats and sofa-backs, half veiled by ingenious dust-traps of worsted work, on which the traveller must have been weary indeed who sought repose; a mirror over the mantelpiece, of course, reflecting some bunches of highly coloured feather flowers and a sample of last year's oats, and stuck round the margin with a few funeral or memorial



cards of the landlady's departed friends.

Drip, drip, splash, drip! went the weeping eaves upon the pavement; the bare ash-boughs round the town bowling-green whimpered in the wet wind,—it was not exhilarating. A pinched dozen of books propped each other rather dismally on a shelf of the side-table, which they shared with a most unattractive cruet-stand and a carafe of water of a complexion which almost excluded the idea of beverage. A tattered volume of 'Good Words'; somebody's 'Life of Lord Beaconsfield,' in *criard* blue cloth and brassy gilding; Whately's 'Logic'; Whitaker's Almanack, five years old—Hey! what's this in walnut calf? not an Aldine classic? It is, though; and very oddly it stirs one to come on the honoured dolphin and anchor among such ignoble surroundings; to turn the pages of fine flax paper, printed in delicate italics, "justified" with as nice a sense of symmetry as three centuries and a half of finger practice have imparted to latter-day craftsmen, not to reckon linotypes, monotypes, and other inartistic inventions. The book is in large octavo—the 'Libri de Re Rusticâ'—printed in Venice in 1533.

Now, whatever people may pretend, there are very, very few nowadays who read Latin and Greek authors by deliberate choice. Fifty years ago it may have been—nay, it was—a little different: educated persons were careful to mention in their journals how they carried in their pockets duodecimos of Virgil or Horace, to be enjoyed at odd moments. But even so, was there not in this a suspicion of pose, or at least the conscious display of culture? At all events, when W. H. Smith & Son began to set up their book-

stalls in the early days of the railway era, *ils connaissaient leur monde* far too well to stock them with literature of that nature, even for first-class passengers. No; I don't wish it to be understood that under other circumstances I should have wasted a moment over this volume of agricultural writers, but circumstance accounts for a great deal. The time spent with Columella in his olive-yard, herb-garden, cattle-pen, and sheepfold passed very quickly; when my po'-shay came to the door, I tucked the book under my arm, pressed five shillings into the landlady's hand (I believe I might have had it for ninepence), carried off my booty, and—have never looked at it from that day to this, when it is lying before me.

In this instance the secret of delight lay in the unexpected—the contrast between the gorgeous Queen of the Adriatic, which gave this venerable volume birth, and the little grey town on the dreary northern seaboard where it found a rest for its old age. How came it there? Had it been the solace of some coach traveller—Bishop Pococke, belike—left by him on his Scottish travels? if so, where had he picked it up? Why, to trace the various owners since first these sheets came damp from the press, and to know all about them, would be to learn the history of Western Europe since the Middle Ages. After all, the most likely solution was that the book had formed part of a country minister's library, and had found its way to the hammer when the good man went to his place.

Many an exciting chase has started from the bookshelves of a country-house. You dawdle in there after breakfast; your host, who makes the library his business-



room, has betaken himself to a County Council meeting; the men have gone a-shooting, and you have the prospect of undisturbed possession till luncheon-time at least. Now it is a constant, and by no means an unfruitful, feature of country-house libraries that the bulk of the books belong to one period. Perhaps one of your host's predecessors has been bookish, and put up cases for current literature; or else the necessity for filling the shelves has produced, at the time the house was built or the library furnished, a stock of volumes purchased nearly at the same time. That brings the subject neatly within the limits of your morning's prowl. I spent a forenoon lately in a well-ordered little library which fulfilled somebody's aspiration—

“Where the Rudyard's cease from  
kipling,  
And the Haggards ride no more.”

Not a single volume seemed to have been added to the collection since 1833, but it was well stocked with the literature of the first quarter of the century. This house, by the bye, had some sombre associations. Standing above, and well within a mile of, the sea, the site had been so chosen, of deliberate purpose, that not a glimpse of the sea could be had from any of its windows. It was built when the family moved from a far older house, which stands now, a weather-wasted ruin, on the very verge of a beetling cliff, against which the green Atlantic surges growl and roar continually. They show you a window, looking upon the sea, out of which, more than a century and a half ago, fell a child, heir to the estate, and was dashed to pieces a hundred feet below. The mother could never thereafter en-

dure the sight or sound of the tide, and persuaded her husband to desert the old home, and build a new one whence the sea could neither be seen nor heard.

It is tantalising when there are more than a limited number of books in private hands, for they are seldom kept in convenient array. A few weeks ago, however, I found myself in a large country-house in the Midlands where the condition of the library is truly ideal. It is disposed in a long gallery, rather than a room, running the entire length of one side of the house on the ground-floor. In addition to that there are book-shelves in almost every room in the house; the bachelors' attics, especially, are rich in them from floor to ceiling: in all there cannot be less than 18,000 or 20,000 volumes. There is no regular librarian, indeed, which might seem indispensable to the right herding of such a numerous flock; but the parish schoolmaster is a bibliophile, and devotes his leisure hours to watching over it, and writing up the catalogue.

It is a good thing to have an object of pursuit; in fact, without it a large library like this is rather a wilderness, except to the owner who knows his way about it. But it is delightful to prowl round and pitch on any title which seems to bear, however remotely, on the subject before you. One is sure in following it up to light upon all kinds of alluring bypaths, and one is often indemnified for the time lost in following these, not by anything new, for “he that has read Shakespeare through with attention will perhaps find little new in this crowded world,” but by unexpected bits of amusement or knowledge.

Such was my lot on a morning lately spent in this library. I



had undertaken some work connected with the sporting literature of the early part of the present century. Nobody who has not tried it would believe what a lot of rubbish this means to sample. Eighty years ago, field-sports were only beginning to be pastimes for cultivated men; even fox-hunting—the sport of kings—hardly lived in literature till Nimrod began his famous letters to the ‘Sporting Magazine.’ Fingering a small volume of essays, dated 1815 to 1819, in boards of that unapproachably ugly grey, which is for ever hallowed by association with the first editions of the *Waverley Novels*, Byron’s poems, and innumerable other masterpieces, my eye was arrested by the title of a paper “On Field Sports.” This proved to be, not, as had been too likely, a mixture of feeble rhapsody and stale description, of those interminable colloquies between a duffer and an expert which are insupportable from any hand less honoured than Izaak Walton’s, but a vigorous refutation in good plain English of the charge of cruelty made against sport.

“Whenever I see a wood full of hares and pheasants in summer, I rejoice that, for the sake of two days’ carnage in winter, men have consented to give life and enjoyment to so many beautiful and peaceful animals.”

Herein is a perfect answer to those who denounce as guilt all bloodshed in sport; who not only take on them Wordsworth’s vow—

“Never to mix their pleasure or their pride  
With sorrow of the meanest thing that feels”—

but seek to impose it on everybody else.

It is better, says the sportsman, that certain creatures should be propagated and preserved during the greater part of the year, and killed under chivalrous conditions during the remaining months, than that protection should be withdrawn, and total extermination inevitably follow. Here is how this author imagines a fox might address the ultra-humanitarians after the abolition of hunting:—

“Formerly we were allowed six months in the year to gain our livelihood, and bring up our families in quiet: many of us, it is true, were destroyed in the course of the winter; but that was the fortune of war, and the enemy did not beat up our quarters more than half-a-dozen times in the whole year. Upon the whole, we lived a pleasant life,—short and disturbed, perhaps, yet safe from trap and gun, and in the midst of plenty; but now that you have interfered, with your humanity, there has come out a general order to shoot and destroy us wherever we may be found, till our ancient family is exterminated. And this is out of your special kindness!”

Seventy-eight years ago this essay was written, and if we, who believe in the legitimacy of field-sports, have found no better reasons for their support, neither have our opponents improved their principles of attack.

Not having been aware that the dispute was such a venerable one, I became curious to identify the author of the volume:<sup>1</sup> therefore, as my business next day happened to lie with the present representative of the venerable firm who published it, I put it in my pocket and asked for the information. It required some research, which he obliged me by undertaking; but when obtained, it was not without

<sup>1</sup> *Essays and Sketches of Life and Character.* By a Gentleman who has left his Lodgings. London: Longman, Hurst, &c., 1820.



interest. The "Gentleman who has left his Lodgings" turns out to have been Lord John Russell, whose early ambition for a place among the poets is perhaps better known than his excursions in prose. Acquaintance with the subsequent career of the author gives piquancy to certain passages in a paper on Political Economy, notably with those referring to the corn duties:—

"It is very easy to say that the trade in corn ought to be free, like any other trade, and that if your farmers cannot grow corn so cheap as the foreign farmers, they ought to let it alone. But . . . when you are told that many millions of capital have been laid out, and many hundred thousand people bred and employed, on the presumption that the growth of corn would continue to be protected by law; when it is stated to you that the taxes are so heavy in this country" (this essay is dated 1819, when agricultural depression was beginning to be acutely felt, owing to the fall in prices after the war) "and so light in other countries, that the effect of a free importation of corn would be the ruin of all the farmers, the conversion of the people entirely into manufacturers, and the consequent dependence of the whole nation on the commercial laws, and even the caprices, of foreign nations, you must own that you have a knotty question to decide."

But the most interesting of these essays are those which reflect the social habits of the metropolis when George IV. became king. London in those days was pent within what we should consider very moderate bounds. Greater London, instead of four millions, contained in 1820 just one million and a quarter inhabitants; while the part of the town described in Lord John's paper, "Society in London," actually lay between Green and Hyde Parks on the west and Regent

Street and Spring Gardens on the east. The proverbial snipe still attracted sportsmen to the marshy flats of Belgravia, and Tyburnia was devoted to dairy-farms and market-gardens. Chelsea and Kensington remained remote suburbs, while Paddington and Westbourne were no more than rural villages. Practically the people of whom Lord John undertakes to describe the habits lived in Portman Square, Mayfair, and St James's, with a sprinkling in Westminster, and one would have supposed that to be a convenient radius for easy intercourse. But no; the burden of the writer's complaint is precisely the same as one hears, only surely with more reason, at the present day:—

"'To love some persons very much, and see often those that I love,' says the old Duchess of Marlborough, 'is the greatest happiness I can enjoy.' But in London it is equally difficult to get to love anybody very much, or to see often those that we have loved before. There are such numbers of acquaintances, such a succession of engagements, that the town resembles Vauxhall, where the dearest friends may walk round and round all night without ever meeting. If you see at dinner a person whose manners and conversation please you, you may wish in vain to become more intimate; for the chance is that you will not meet so as to converse a second time for three months, when the dice-box of society may perhaps turn up again the same numbers. . . . Hence it is that those who live in London are totally indifferent to one another; the waves follow so quick that any vacancy is immediately filled up, and the want is not perceived. . . . We hear continually such conversations as the following: 'Ah! how d'y'e do? I'm delighted to see you! How is Mrs M——?' 'She is very well, thank you.' 'Has she any more children?' 'Any more. I have only been married three months. I see you are talking of my former wife—she has been dead these three years.' Or: 'My dear



friend, how d'ye do?—you have been out of town some time; where have you been?—in Norfolk?' 'No; I have been two years in India.'

On the whole, it is rather reassuring to follow this young moralist in his mournful musing. We have all felt the oppression of too large an acquaintance, of the crush and bustle which separates friends; and we have all cast back regretful glances to a time when we believed the town was not too big or too full for leisurely intercourse. We have sighed over the description of wits and foremost men who exchanged repartee and uttered quotable sayings across Sam Rogers's breakfast-table, little imagining perhaps that these very persons were comparing their own social opportunities discontentedly with the good old times when pamphleteers, playwrights, poets, and lexicographers foregathered in the exhilarating frowsiness of the coffee-house. Railways have been badly blamed for the present congestion, yet here we have a young fellow of seven-and-twenty, with all the best houses in London open to him, and with time at his own disposal, declaring, nearly twenty years before the first railway was opened from London, that for all intellectual or social enjoyment the town was impossible. "The friendships of London," he exclaims, "contain nothing more tender than a visiting-card." Even relations are practically inaccessible, owing to their numerous engagements; and in describing his failure to find them at home, Lord John affords an interesting glimpse of the fashionable hours in his youth:—

"If you go to see them at one o'clock, they are not up; at two the room is full of indifferent acquaintance; . . . at three they are gone

shopping; at four they are in the Park; at five and six they are out; at seven they are dressing; at eight they are dining with two dozen friends; at nine and ten the same; at eleven they are dressing for the ball; and at twelve, when you are going to bed, they are gone into society for the evening."

Now, this little snap-shot at society has, in its main features, much that might have been reflected from the routine of last season. The average London dinner-hour at the present day is not half an hour later than it was in 1820, nor, as I had imagined, did balls begin any earlier at the close of the Georgian era. Nevertheless, there are two or three salient differences between the two epochs. There is no mention of early riding, which is really one of the most remarkable and healthy characteristics of our *jeunesse dorée* of both sexes. On those very rare occasions when the force of circumstances is irresistible and I find myself in a ballroom, not less out of keeping with the scene than an erratic glacial block in a green meadow, next morning I feel like nothing so much (to continue the geological figure) as an alluvial deposit. Certainly matutinal horse-exercise seems the last restorative to present itself. Yet the early stroller at any hour from eight to ten of a fine summer morning may see shiny-coated hacks, many of them with side-saddles, standing at the doors of mansions in Belgraveia or Mayfair; and if he wait till their riders appear, he will fail to detect in those bright eyes and roseate cheeks any trace of that inevitable "chippiness" which so surely racks the unpractised ball-goer. Lord John Russell's young friends lay abed till midday: ours come out with the morning papers.

There was no five o'clock tea;



but let that pass. I am not writing *virginibus puerisque*, but for people of mature, or perhaps a trifle *plus quam* mature, years and judgment. There was a much more ominous void in the day's arrangements. *There was no luncheon*—at least for men.

"The first inconvenience of a London life is the late hour of dinner. To pass the day *impransus*, and then to sit down to a great dinner at eight o'clock, is entirely against the first dictates of common-sense and—common stomachs." (Agreed, agreed!) "Women, however, are not so irrational as men in London, and generally sit down to a substantial luncheon at three or four" (*italics ours*): "if men would do the same, the meal at eight might be lightened of many of its weighty dishes, and conversation would be no loser; for it is not to be concealed that conversation suffers great interruption from the manner in which English dinners are managed. First the host and hostess (or her unfortunate coadjutor) are employed during three parts of dinner in doing the work of the servants, helping fish, or carving large pieces of venison to twenty hungry souls. . . . Much time is also lost by the attention every one is obliged to pay in order to find out (which he never can do if he is short-sighted) what dishes are at the other end of the table. If a guest wishes for a glass of wine, he must peep through the Apollos and Cupids of the *plateau*, in order to find some one to drink with him; otherwise he must wait till some one asks him, which will probably happen in rapid succession, so that after having had no wine for half an hour, he will have to drink five glasses in five minutes."

One might spend a good deal more time over these sketches, traced by one who thoroughly understood what he was writing about. Novelists, hitherto, have shunned George IV.'s reign with curious unanimity; when they turn to it they will doubtless find that men and women were curious-

ly like those of other epochs, and Lord John Russell's papers will form a most valuable handbook to the manners and tone of good society in the 'twenties.

Before replacing this book on its shelf, let me note two or three observations by this thoroughbred and thorough-paced Whig on more serious matters.

The perpetual bugbear of his party was the power of the Crown; in fact it had been the dread of the preponderance of that estate to which the Whigs owed their birth. This dread, remote as it may appear in our eyes, was very present in 1819 to the apprehensions of the future Prime Minister, and he reckoned up anxiously "what the Crown has gained upon liberty during this reign" (George III.'s). He complained that the sanguinary excesses of the French Revolution had been greatly exaggerated in order to inflame the public mind against the slightest indulgence of the popular right of meeting and discussion, and that the Royal prerogative had been augmented by the increase of the national war-debt. It is hardly worth following this nascent statesman into his warning against risks which are not likely to recur in this country. Their disappearance has removed the last objection to the amalgamation of the Whig "Left centre" with the Conservative "Right." For tactical purposes it has been decided to maintain the Liberal Unionist organisation distinct from that of the Conservatives, out of deference to those electors (surely only a handful) who would demur to voting for a party that was once Tory. But the Tory bugbear is as unreal now as that of the power of the Court. There is only one Tory in politics now—all honour to him!—that gallant Yorkshireman, the Right



Hon. James Lowther, the sole exponent of the "extreme Right."

A parting glance at Lord John's pages reveals a statement of peculiar significance at a time when an important class of our artisans have been induced by their leaders to sacrifice a million or so in wages and squander another half-million in strike-pay, in the attempt to secure an eight hours' day for London engineers:—

"An intelligent manufacturer, who travelled to ascertain the state of manufactures in France, found that the main difference between that country and England was—that the English workmen worked many more hours than the French."

If that is the way our commercial supremacy was attained, it suggests certain reflections about the surest way of losing it.

Very different is the next book that comes to hand; as an edition, not so old as the other by more than forty years, but in composition its senior by nearly a thousand. It is a collection of Anglo-Saxon treatises on medicine, admirably edited by Mr Oswald Cockayne for the Records series;<sup>1</sup> and one turns to it indolently to see what mad or blind pranks our forefathers played with their constitutions, and to thank God that we are not such blockheads as they. In truth, many of the remedies prescribed seem worse than the diseases they professed to cure: unspeakably nasty, some of them, directing how the filthiest things on earth were to be pounded together and mixed with the patient's meat and drink, in a manner of which the slightest acquaintance with bacteriology and the history of internal parasites enables us to perceive the ter-

rible danger; irresistibly ludicrous others, as when wise Abbot Ælfric (for he *was* wise in many things) directs as a remedy for headache a salve composed of forty-four "worts" or plants, and the fat or bones of fourteen animals, to be rubbed on after repeating the Creed, the Magnificat, the Benedictus, and the prayer of the Four Evangelists.

Ælfric, of course, was only repeating what had been handed down to him from pagan forebears—*plus* the Christian anthems and prayers; nor were these pagan forebears, perhaps, so simple as we may suppose. The Germanic colonists, who proved strong enough to relegate the Keltic tribes of Britain to the "fringe" they still enjoy, had not been wanting in brains. Their chief deity was Woden—a name cognate with our "wit" and "wisdom"—they worshipped him as the Almighty Wit—the Supreme Intelligence. To Thor—the mighty Thunderer—was assigned inferior rank to Woden—brute force they never imagined as a match for intellect. It is true they were of the same Teutonic stem which had overthrown the culture of Rome, and violently checked the current of civilisation for nearly a thousand years; it is true that we, their descendants, are wont to use their names—Goths and Vandals—to typify everything that is brutal and ignorant and coarse. Yet even among these Germans there were a few who were careful to preserve and hand down some of the ancient learning. They studied, and even translated, many works of Greek and Latin writers, and much of their leechcraft was derived from Hippo-

<sup>1</sup> Leechdoms, Wortcunning, and Starcraft of Early England, collected and edited by the Rev. Oswald Cockayne. Three vols. 1864-66.



crates, Æsculapius, and Plato. But the ingenious and delicate surgical instruments, of which such a variety have been unearthed at Herculaneum and Pompeii, were unknown to them, or, if known, their use had been forgotten: surgical and medical science had to be reconstructed from the foundation.

One instrument, and one only, seems to have been common to all ages—the lancet. Down to fifty or sixty years ago blood-letting was indiscriminately prescribed and universally believed in. I possess a folio account-book of an ancestor who flourished when the eighteenth century was still young—most entertaining reading, by reason of his having made it a kind of journal also. Regularly, every spring and autumn for many years, recurs an entry such as this:—

“To a chirurgeon, for blood-  
ing my wife, Peggy, and  
me, and for giving Peggy a  
vomit . . . . . 28 l.”

Peggy was the worthy gentleman's daughter, and the fee was in Scots money.

The Saxons used the lancet at frightful haphazard, except that they were positive about the right time of year. In an old leech-book written by one Cild (probably only a clerk writing from dictation) for the Abbey of Glastonbury, much stress is laid on the risk of bloodletting fifteen nights before Lammas (August 1st) and after it for five-and-thirty nights, because the “lyft” (air) is then most impure. Herein is a trace of Mediterranean lore, from a latitude where men had learnt to dread the sirocco. But there is an appalling vagueness in directions for the operation:—

“Let him blood from the left arm

from the upper vein; if thou canst not find that (*gif thu tha findan ne mæge*), from the midmost vein; if thou canst not find that, then from the head vein. Further, if that cannot be found, let blood from the left hand, from a vein near the little finger. If the blood be very red or livid, then must it be let more plentifully; if it be clean or clear, let, it so much the less.”

Evidently this eminent surgeon did not know the vital difference between arterial and venous blood, and his diagnosis was based on the quality of the blood, differing accordingly as he had tapped a vein or an artery!

It is horrible to think that blood-letting was pronounced indispensable in the “half-dead addle,” as the Anglo-Saxons called paralysis, in order to draw forth the poisonous humours from the patient. This theory of humours died very hard in medicine; it drove bravely through the eighteenth century.

There was, of course, no distinction till long after the Norman Conquest between surgeons and physicians: though the use of the catheter, the probe, the dioptra, and the forceps, all known to practitioners in classical times, had been forgotten, anybody could handle knife and saw. Therefore the directions are of the simplest how to proceed “if thou wilt carve off or lop off a limb from a body” (*gif thu wille lim aceorvan othe asnithan*).

From time to time one stumbles on a bit of sound and solid sense, as when the writer is prescribing remedies for loss of appetite—a terrible calamity to overtake people from whom we derive our own unrivalled proficiency with knife and fork. A Saxon lord who refused his victuals must indeed, it was thought, be in parlous case—probably possessed of a devil or two; consequently



a great variety of recipes are given to restore the appetite, among them one which looks curiously modern—"Let them seek for themselves fatigue in riding on horseback, or in a wain as much as they can endure." Carriage exercise in a springless wain meant a more rigorous experience than a drive in Hyde Park on rubber tyres.

After all, the leeches of those days were not such fools as we are inclined to pronounce them. They wrote very foolish prescriptions, and some very nasty ones, but how much of them all did they believe? Is there any fashionable physician in London at this moment who will declare on his honour that he relies as much on the resources of the pharmacopœia as on the faith of his patients? How many modern doctors have the courage, when they recommend regimen rather than drugs, to reply as the famous Jephson did to Lady Londonderry? "Sir," she asked, scandalised at the severe simplicity of his orders, "do you know whom you're speaking to?" "Yes, ma'am; to an old woman with a disordered stomach." The Saxon leeches had very hazy ideas about the properties of herbs: it was certain, anyhow, that they had *some* properties, and the popular notion was that herbs were essential to any cure, so they complied with it, and added a lot of fantastic observances—partly *ex tempore*, and partly derived from the world-wide and world-old doctrines of the Magi. Doubtless these complicated instructions contributed to convalescence. It requires little knowledge of human nature to perceive that a Saxon thane, suffering from prolonged over-feeding, would think very cheaply of the leech who ordered him to go bumping about on an

underbred hack or jolting for miles in a farm-cart: it was necessary to invent decoctions—the more nauseous the better—to beguile the patient's imagination. In short, leeches were *expected* to administer herb-potions, for such was the tradition of leechcraft from wiser times: the properties of the various herbs had been forgotten during ages of anarchy, and the science had to be slowly recovered.

Leeches did not hesitate to go beyond the vegetable kingdom in order to influence powerfully the minds of their patients. There is nothing that affects the imagination more violently than cruelty, and cruel some of these recipes undoubtedly are. Cataract, about the nature of which the leeches can have known absolutely nothing, was to be treated in this way. Catch a fox alive, cut out his tongue, and let him go; dry the tongue, sew it in a red cloth, and hang it round the patient's neck. As a precaution against pestilence, take a live badger and beat out his teeth, put them in a linen bag, and wear them next the body. For jaundice the sovereign remedy is indeed a terrible one: you are to take the head of a mad dog, pound it, mix it with wine, and drink it.

It is sad to think that in the centuries since Pliny and Lucian mocked at the Magi all this rubbish had been allowed to accumulate and impede the ascent of man. The work had all to be done over again. Pliny had declared that of all earthly systems the doctrines of the Magi were the most fraudulent—not stupid, but fraudulent; yet even he inclined to believe that the popular notion could not be altogether groundless that a man by eating roast hare improved his looks for nine days.



"Born a goddess, dulness never dies." Be assured, it is far from dead yet. It lurks in privy places, waiting for some dislocation of our prodigious progress, some clouding of our splendid enlightenment, to spread its pall upon our faculties.

Sometimes one comes on a sample of it when least expecting anything of the sort. The man is still alive (and one of the most intelligent and upright of his class that I ever knew) who once recommended me, as a cure for sty in the eye, to gather nine thorns from a gooseberry-bush, burn eight of them to ashes, and prick the sty with the ninth. In another instance, which happened in my own parish within the last five-and-twenty years, may be recognised that principle of propitiation by sacrifice which lies at the base of all religion and its corruption—superstition. A certain farmer very well known to me, whose social standing may be understood from the fact that he was an elder of the Kirk and paid about £300 a-year in rent, wishing to rid his cattle of the disease known as "blackleg," caused a calf or stirk to be buried alive. Many persons were present at the ceremony, including the local veterinary surgeon!

It will be observed that this propitiatory notion, which runs through so much ordinary folklore, has very little place in these Anglo-Saxon prescriptions, most of which are purely empirical and arbitrary. It appears, indeed, in the directions quoted above for curing cataract, and in some of the recipes for the bite of a mad dog; but, as a rule, the cure was supposed to depend on the virtues of specified ingredients, modified sometimes by the hour of the day or the age of the moon. A few of these ingredients—mustard, aloes, colchicum, ginger, saffron, sul-

phur, mercury, &c.—remain in the modern pharmacopœia: their use had been well known to oriental and Roman physicians; their tradition had been preserved, but all understanding of their true properties had been lost in the general wreck of learning.

Sometimes the Saxon name actually preserved the true use of a wort—which had been perverted to other and probably futile purposes. Thus *Delphinium staphisagria*, staves-acre, was known to the Saxons as louse-bane, yet they recommended a drink of it to correct evil humours of the body. At this day there is no such sovereign cure for vermin in a dog's coat. Among herbs that may be reckoned neutral in effect betony was ever a prime favourite; in the herbarium of Apuleius it is recommended for no less than twenty-nine separate ailments—for toothache, for sore eyes, for a broken head, for stomach-ache, for fatigue after "mickle riding or mickle ganging," for indigestion ("if thou wilt that thy meat melt easily"), for bite of an adder or a mad dog, for sore throat, or for "foot-addle" (gout). Hardly less popular was waybread (plantain), which must at least have furnished a harmless draught, disposing the patient to give an easy rein to his imagination.

Physicians, audaciously laying claim to superior powers, easily came to get credit for them, and became known as "doctors"—more learned than the common folk. Some of them were so bold as to pretend to skill in many things beyond medicine. A curious medley of charms borrowed from the Magi and Christian prayers is associated with vivid scenes of Early English pastoral life. Thus when a man had lost his cattle, which must



have been a common occurrence in an unfenced country, the natural assumption was that some evil-doer had driven them off. He was directed to say his prayers three times to each quarter of the heavens, and then cry: "The Jews hung up Christ; they did of deeds the worst; they did that they could not hide. So may this

deed be no wise hidden, through the Holy Rood of Christ."

Prayers became just as much ingredients in prescriptions as any drug; and it was considered important that, like drugs, they should be "exhibited" in proper proportions. Hence a table of equivalents was prepared as follows:—

One mass	was reckoned	equal to twelve days'	fasting.
Ten masses	were reckoned	" four months'	"
Twenty masses	"	" eight months'	"
Thirty masses	"	" twelve months'	"
One psalm	was reckoned	" one day's	"
120 psalms	were reckoned	" twelve months'	"

Happy the patient or criminal who could afford to pay for having psalms and masses sung!

Christianity, by the time it reached the pagan Saxons, had lost its pristine purity, and the light it shed on the physical world had become tinged with earth-born rays. The Saxon convert was free to retain the fixed belief of his fathers in the presence everywhere of incorporeal spirits—evil and good. For him the forest-glade or river-cliff was still the haunt of the dreaded wood-mare, as he called the echo; and we have retained the term by which he personified the visitation apt to follow too generous a supper—a nightmare.

And thus men blundered on, using prayers and charms and herbs, sometimes hitting on something really useful and adding it to the store of real knowledge. After all, we owe these venerable

quacks something. *Somebody* had to begin the ascent: the lowest steps on the stair were very dimly lighted, and the first to set foot on them stumbled and wandered in a way we are apt to think supremely ridiculous; but no height could be gained without the help of these. Nothing is attained in science *per saltum*; little by little, line upon line, is progress made, till the light increases and the view broadens. In musing upon the lucubrations of these pioneers in leechcraft, one is disposed rather to admire the good purpose to which they put the dull wits of their patients, than to hold them up to derision for the preposterous remedies they prescribed. They were the Beechams and the Carters of the tenth century, and, on the whole, produced literature more interesting than our nineteenth-century empirics.

HERBERT MAXWELL.

(To be continued.)